

MEETING REPORT NO. 01

PROJECT: **Town of Needham Downtown Study**

DATE: 12 October 2006

LOCATION: Needham Public Library

PRESENT: Downtown Study Committee (DSC)

Jack Cogswell	Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Bob Smart	Chairman, Planning Board
Moe Handel	Member, Planning Board
Lee Newman	Planning Director
Nicole Bourassa	Assistant Planner
Peter Fugere	Needham Housing Authority
Paul Good	Chair, Needham Community Revitalization Committee
Tom O'Rourke	President, Chamber of Commerce
Jeanne McKnight	League of Women Voters
John J. McQuillan	Business Owner
Bob Hentschel	Property Owner
Martin Batt	Citizen at Large
Peter Friedenberg	Citizen at Large

Town Manager

Kate Fitzpatrick (Partial)

DiNisco Design Partnership (DDP)

Kenneth DiNisco
Richard N. Rice (Partial)
Jon Oman

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of the initial meeting was to discuss the project approach, scope of work, work plan and deliverables for this study.

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1. Ken DiNisco presented an overview of the project. See attached PowerPoint presentation and presentation markups. Also attached is the memorandum distributed in advance of the meeting outlining project approach, scope of work, work plan and deliverables. The memorandum has been revised to clarify the six themes of the study in response to a question from the DSC.

3. GROUP DISCUSSION

- 3.1. Members of the DSC were given the opportunity to state what they saw as objectives of the study. These remarks are summarized below.
- Greater density, usage and activity
 - Increased tax base
 - A parking structure – possible locations Junction Place, Chapel Street
 - Mixed, complimentary uses
 - More and enhanced community spaces. Opportunities to celebrate what is unique about Needham
 - Downtown housing
 - Better streetscape
 - Better lighting for safety at night – equates to livability
 - Pride of ownership, related to improvements and upkeep of public and private property
 - Both long-term goals and achievable, realistic short-term goals that are consistent with long-term goals.
 - Optimum development based on revised zoning regulations
 - Celebration of Town, such as Harvest Fair, Street Fair and July 4th
- 3.2. Some general comments were also offered by members of the DSC including:
- Examples of small successes include
 - Streetscape improvements at Chapel Street by private property owner
 - Circle of Peace sculpture on the Town Common

4. SCHEDULE

- 4.1. Lee Newman anticipates that the Comprehensive Development Plan including recommendations for Town land use and zoning policy will be presented to a Special Town Meeting in fall 2007 rather than the spring 2006 Town Meeting. The schedule included with the attached Memorandum will be accordingly revised and distributed separately.

5. NEXT MEETINGS

- 5.1. DSC members will be emailed when the next meeting has been scheduled.

The discussions of this meeting are recorded as understood by the writer. Please advise the writer of any omissions or corrections.



Jon Oxman AIA
DiNISCO DESIGN

JAO/

cc: DSC
Kenneth DiNisco
Richard Rice

Enclosure: 1. Presentation: DSC Meeting (10/12/06) including presentation markups.

2. Memorandum: Project Approach, Scope of Work, Work Plan & Deliverables (10/06/16) ***Revised based on discussion at this meeting.***



**Service
Commitment
Design Excellence**

PROJECT TEAM

DiNisco Design Partnership

Ken DiNisco, Principal
Rick Rice, Project Manager
Donna Crawford, Programming
Jon Oxman, Project Architect
Michael Fazio, Project Architect

**Service
Commitment
Design Excellence**

CONSULTANTS

DiNisco Design Partnership

Planning, Zoning & Development
Judi Barrett
Planning, Zoning & Development
John Connery
Traffic / Transportation
Kien Ho
Real Estate Analyst
Jon Avery
Landscape Planner / Urban Designer
Bill Brown
Cost Analysis
AM Fogarty & Associates

What Village 1880-1910

**Events That
Shaped Our Town**

What Village 1880-1910

Events That
Shaped Our Town



What Village 1880-1910

Events That
Shaped Our Town



What Village 1880-1910

Events That
Shaped Our Town



What Village 1880-1910

Events That
Shaped Our Town



What Village 1880-1910

Events That
Shaped Our Town



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



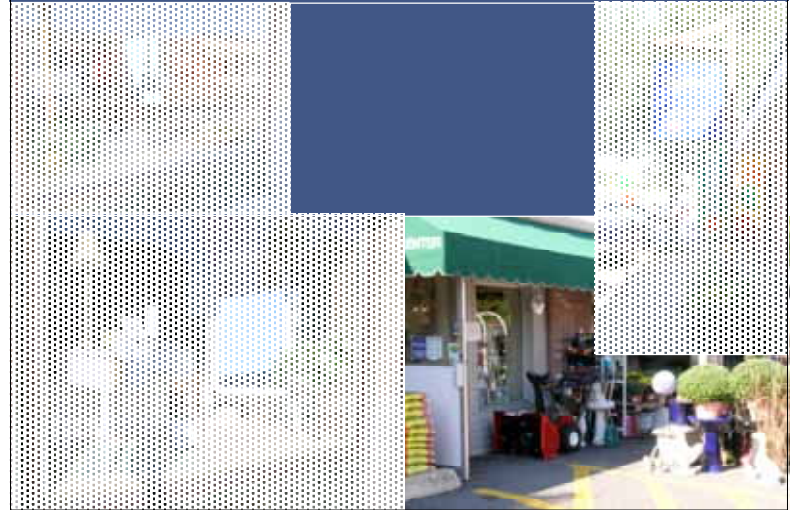
What Village 2006



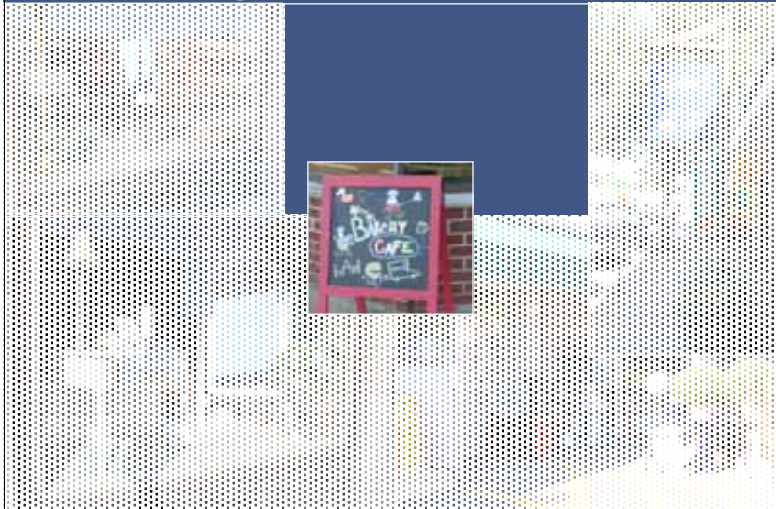
What Village 2006



What Village 2006



What Village 2006



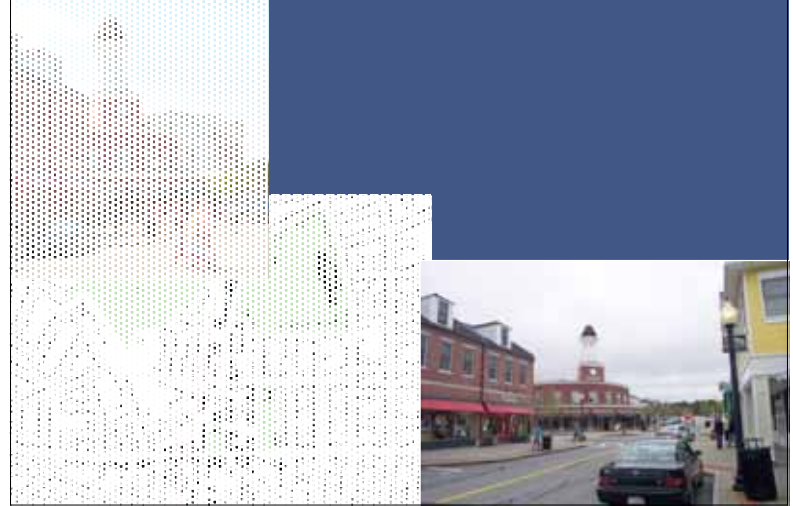
What Village Future



What Village Future



What Village Future



What Village Future



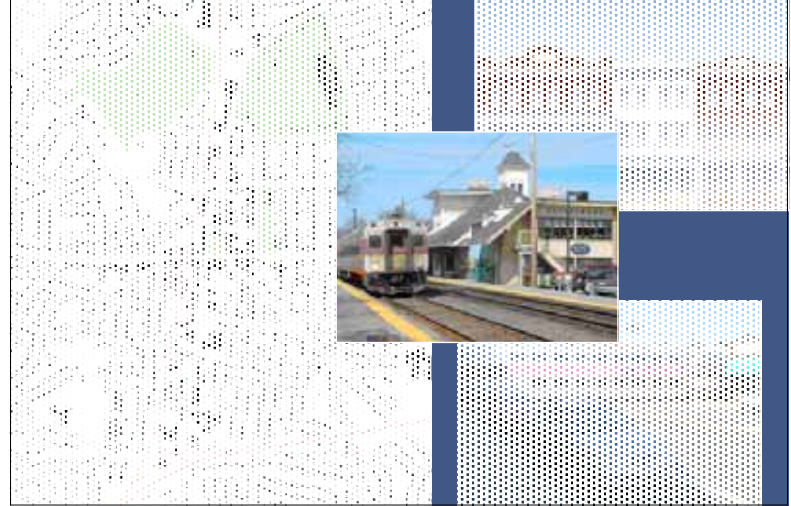
What Village Future



What Diverse Housing



What Diverse Housing



What Streetscape / Built Form



What Streetscape / Built Form



What Streetscape / Built Form



What Streetscape / Built Form



What Traffic



What Traffic



What Parking



What Retail



What Development Plan



What Development Plan



What Development Plan



What Development Plan



How Scope of Work

Survey of Existing Conditions (10%)

- Market Trends
- Land Use
- Ownership Patterns
- Building Conditions
- Traffic / Parking / Streetscape

How Scope of Work

Community Goals & Objectives (10%)

- Town-wide Workshops
- Consensus = Action
 - Business
 - Property Owners
 - Residents

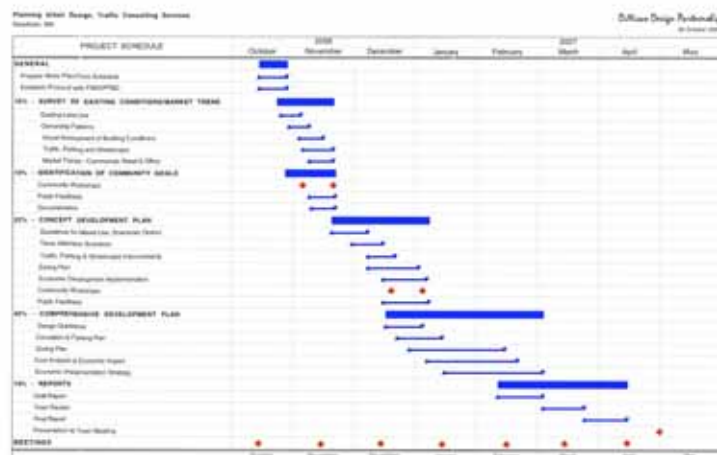
How Scope of Work

- Concept Plan (25%)
- Development Plan (45%)
- Report (10%)

How Implementation - Zoning

- Current Build-out Analysis
- Proposed By-Right
- Special Permit Scenarios
 - Overlay Districts
 - Form Based Zoning
 - Design Guidelines

How Time Schedule



How Implementation



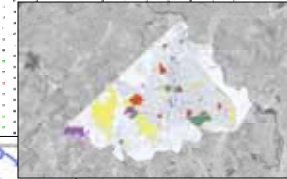
How Implementation

"Needham is a great place to live and work"



Ken DiNisco - Team Leader / Facilitator

- Project Liaison
- Facilitator
- Planning



Judi Barrett - Planning, Zoning & Redevelopment

- Master Plans
- Land Use & Growth Mgmt
- Downtown Studies
- Development Impact Analysis
- Re-use/Re-development
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Community Economic Development



John Connery - Planning, Zoning & Redevelopment

- Municipal Planning
- Zoning
- Fiscal Issues



(1) Main Street
 (2) Highland Commercial
 (3) New England Business Center

Kien Ho - Traffic / Transportation

- Traffic Management Plans
- Streetscapes
- Comprehensive Community Plans



Jon Avery - Real Estate Analyst

- Consulting
- Marketing Strategies
- Appraisals
- Private / Public



Bill Brown - Land Planner

- Urban Planning
- Urban Design
- Streetscape Design



Town of Needham Downtown Initiative

DiNisco Design Partnership

Memorandum

Date: 16 October 2006
To: Downtown Study Committee
From: Jon Oxman
Re: Needham Downtown Study
Subject: **Project Approach, Scope of Work & Work Plan**

Dear Downtown Study Committee Members,

We have prepared this memorandum to provide you with an overview of the study in advance of our first meeting next week (Thursday 12 October at 7:30 PM). Outlined below is our Project Approach and the Scope of Work. Each section is preceded with guidelines from the RFP in italics. We have attached for your reference a Site Plan showing the limits of the Study Area and a Project Schedule.

We look forward to working with all of you on this exciting project.

PROJECT APPROACH

OBJECTIVES

- *Develop a cohesive achievable comprehensive plan for the future of the Needham Center Business district, the Chestnut Street Business district, and the Highland Avenue Business district which addresses desired land use and dimensional requirements such as height, setback, coverage, and FAR, as well as parking, traffic, marketing issues, improved aesthetics and the pedestrian environment.*
- *Educate and involve both the residential and commercial community during plan development. In order to clarify the choices which must be made, the process must foster an understanding of the links between parking, traffic and land use decisions. The decisions on the future of the Needham Center Business district, the Chestnut Street Business district, and the Highland Avenue Business district must come from the community and a consensus must be reached between the business and property owners and the residents.*

BACKGROUND

The RFP is a thorough and comprehensive document which is notable for the following reasons:

- It is part of an ongoing master plan study. It is also a dynamic work in process that reflects significant municipal accomplishments during the past seven years and the realization that continued town growth requires a vision for the future and a plan to achieve this vision.
- Substantial steps in this direction include four separate M.I.T. studies in 2003 that focus on the Needham downtown.
- Further, the excellent Needham Community Development Plan (2004) establishes the groundwork with a vision statement for housing, economic development, open space and recreation, and transportation. This document is the foundation for planning the three downtown business districts.

GENERAL

A number of issues are relevant and timely to a successful plan. First, in order to be effective, a plan must be implemented with a broad spectrum of support and understanding. The continuation of town-wide workshops to identify and discuss relevant issues is fundamental to the process. It has been successful in the past and this tradition of inclusion must continue.

Secondly, it is essential that the Needham Business Center Study Committee which includes citizens from the private and public sector, function smoothly and effectively towards the six identified themes of the planning process:

- Sense of Place
- Affordable Housing
- Streetscape and Built Form
- Traffic
- Parking
- Retail

The successful implementation of a plan relies on the leadership of this Study Committee. This requires a balance of entrepreneurial and municipal concerns, and a sense of empowerment by those groups represented by this Committee.

Thirdly, the timing of this study, given the current economic incentives (state loans and grants) for Smart Growth is opportune. Needham's four commuter rail stations places it in a highly competitive position to leverage this unique status and to qualify for State funding.

PROJECT APPROACH

The work of this study is comprehensive and in-depth with a goal to submit a zoning proposal to the May 2007 Town Meeting. The time is short and the scope of work is ambitious. In order to meet these requirements, the study must be inclusive and dynamic. It must be well organized under the leadership of the Study Committee and include public debate. Documentation of a work-in-process must be accessible to participants during and immediately following meetings. These communications must reflect diverse opinions and allow the process to evolve without prematurely ending debate. Maintaining and conveying a sense of openness, balance and fairness is essential to effective dialog.

Towards this end, and immediately following meetings, electronic copies of color drawings, maps, documents (using a "smart board") and meeting reports will be uploaded to a special town web site for access by all participants. This "instantaneous" communication will focus attention on current progress without the bureaucratic quagmire of traditional paperwork and documentation. This agility allows study consultants and participants to focus on immediate issues and "next steps". It is vital and essential to maintain momentum in a dynamic process involving a broad spectrum of participants. This approach requires excellent graphic, computer and presentation skills which we believe has well served the current Facilities Master Plan Study process.

The second significant component to the approach is leadership. Judi Barrett and Ken DiNisco will draw upon the expert resources of the team, and will be present at all committee and public meetings to help identify issues, provide planning alternatives and to lead discussions at meetings and workshops. Together, their combined experiences and involvement represent a commitment of time and emotional investment in the success of this study.

The basis for a successful work plan is clearly established by the comprehensive and detailed RFP. At the project inception all participants must agree to the basic work plan with the understanding that flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues may require modifications and adjustments.

SCOPE OF WORK

PHASE 1 – SURVEY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS / MARKET TREND

The consultant will collect information from the field, Town records, and from previous or ongoing studies to assemble a database for the comprehensive plan. As part of this survey informal interviews with Town officials, business owners, local residents, and other stakeholders to assess the issues in the study area will be conducted. The information gathered through the survey will be documented using maps, plans, computer files, spreadsheets, photographs, and written descriptions. The different tasks listed below will require varying amounts of effort depending on how much data has already been gathered by the Town and by the detail needed to provide a base for the comprehensive plan.

Phase 1 Work Plan

Most of this information is available through the Town and may require comparative evaluation, updating or commentary for:

- a) Existing land use
- b) Ownership patterns

The consultant will:

- Provide visual assessments of general building conditions that identify and inventory soft sites that are under utilized, in poor condition or likely to be redeveloped. This phase is not intended as a detailed documentation of individual buildings.
- Review and assimilate existing traffic, parking and streetscape data into recommendations for design/planning improvements.
- Analyze market trends for commercial, retail, office and industrial space, in conjunction with existing land use, that results in recommendations for business expansion and housing opportunities best suited to the study area and the town.

Phase 1 Deliverables

- Build-out analysis of the Study Area based on existing conditions.
- Survey information and analysis noted above documented in files and graphics that can be easily retrieved, and presented in a summary chapter to be included in the final report.
- Findings and recommendations documented in large-format presentation boards or PowerPoint slides for presentation to the Study Committee and community.

PHASE 2 – IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY GOALS

The consultant shall lead the community in identifying broad goals and objectives for the Study Area through a town-wide community workshop process. The goals should be specific to each of the districts studied and their individual sub-area characteristics. Measurable criteria for evaluating recommended planning options against articulated goals should be created for evaluating Concept and Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

Phase 2 Work Plan

Town-wide community workshops will help identify goals and objectives for each study area, including measurable criteria for evaluations. This process is discussed at length in Project Approach and is vital to the project success. It involves open workshops, public feedback and documentation of the process.

Phase 2 Deliverables

- Community Goals and Objectives for the Study Area documented in files and graphics and presented in a summary chapter in the final report.
- Memorandum summarizing public feedback from town-wide meeting and review period.

PHASE 3 – CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The consultant shall prepare a conceptual level development plan for the Study Area responsive to community articulated goals and that recognizes the overall objective of fostering the development of Needham Center as a mixed-use local downtown shopping district. The Concept Plan shall address land use, the pedestrian environment, parking and traffic issues and shall integrate parking and traffic improvements with zoning changes, enhancement of existing businesses, strategies to encourage compatible new retail, commercial and housing development, and protection of adjacent residential areas. The concept plan for the Study Area shall include the following components described at a concept level.

Phase 3 Work Plan

This section involves planning / design guidelines and alternatives for land use, pedestrian environment, parking, traffic and zoning changes. It involves concepts for private and public land use that includes the entire built environment and the quality of life in the study area. Three alternative development scenarios that illustrate a range of options for the study area will be prepared. This is the initial step in formulating a plan that requires public input, selection from the options presented, modifications and recommendations for the next phase. The Concept Development Plan will include the following components described at a concept level:

- Development Plan and Design Guidelines
- Traffic, Parking and Streetscape Improvement Plan
- Zoning Plan
- Economic Development Implementation Strategy

Phase 3 Deliverables

- Illustrative site plan at 1" = 100".
- At least eight design character sketches.
- Description of sub-area characteristics.
- Draft design guidelines for private development and streetscape. Guidelines will include photos and illustrations.
- Preliminary phasing plan.
- Description of development potential for recommended land uses.
- Preliminary traffic, parking and streetscape recommendations.
- Preliminary zoning recommendations.
- Build-out analysis for each of the proposed concept plans.
- Draft economic development implementation strategy.
- Memorandum summarizing public feedback from town-wide meeting and review period.

PHASE 4 – COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Based on the selected conceptual plan, the consultant shall prepare the comprehensive development plan for the Study Area in more detail. The purpose of the plan is twofold: it shall be capable of being adopted as Town policy in the form of appropriate zoning modifications, and shall be complete enough to serve as a specific framework for the Town to proceed with the redevelopment of the Study Area.

Phase 4 Work Plan

Based upon the selected alternative from the prior phase, the consultant will prepare a development plan for the study area that can be adopted as Town policy based upon zoning modifications. The Comprehensive Development Plan shall include:

- Development Master Plan and Detailed Design Guidelines
- Circulation and Parking Plan
- Zoning Plan
- Cost and Economic Impact Analysis

Phase 4 Deliverables

- Existing plan of the Study area at 1"=100'.
- Property consolidation plan showing parcels to be acquired and buildings to be under proposed Development Plan.
- Final illustrative plan for the study area at 1"=100'.
- At least four street sections showing typical street design.
- At least four sub-area plans at 1"=50' for key sections of the Study Area.
- At least eight illustrative sketches and drawings showing featured areas, architectural and streetscape detailing.
- Design guidelines for private development and streetscape. Guidelines shall include and illustrations.
- Circulation plan at 1"=100' showing all roadway improvements and intersections.
- Parking plan at 1"=100' showing all existing and recommended parking facilities.
- Diagrammatic plan comparing the existing parking and street network with the plan.
- Guidelines for new and reconfigured parking and curb cuts.
- Outline or work tasks for detailed design and implementation of proposed parking roadway improvements.
- Build-out analysis for the final development plan.
- Mapped district boundary plans showing existing and proposed zoning in study.
- Description of recommended zoning changes.
- Table of use regulations and dimensional requirements for Study Area.
- Warrants for zoning changes based on the proposed plan.
- Cost analysis of public and private improvements.
- Assessment of the Comprehensive Plan's economic impact on the Town.
- Economic development and implementation strategy, presented as a sequence of actions to be taken by the Town to redevelop the Study Area.
- Memorandum summarizing public feedback from town-wide meeting and review period.

PHASE 5 – REPORTS

The consultant shall assemble the results of the previous tasks in a final report which will include all relevant graphics, maps and other data.

Phase 5 Work Plan

As noted above in Project Approach, documentation of the study as a work-in-process will be accessible to participants during and immediately following meetings. This will culminate in the Final Report and presentation to Town Meeting in May 2007.

Phase 5 Deliverables

- Draft Report
- Final Report

NEEDHAM CENTER STUDY AREA

Request For Proposals

March, 2006



200 0 200 400 600 Feet



GREAT PLAIN AVENUE

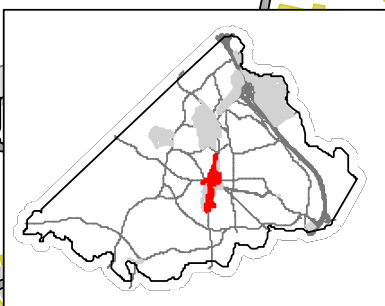
HIGHLAND AVENUE

MAY STREET










































GREAT PLAIN AVENUE

DEDDHAM AVENUE

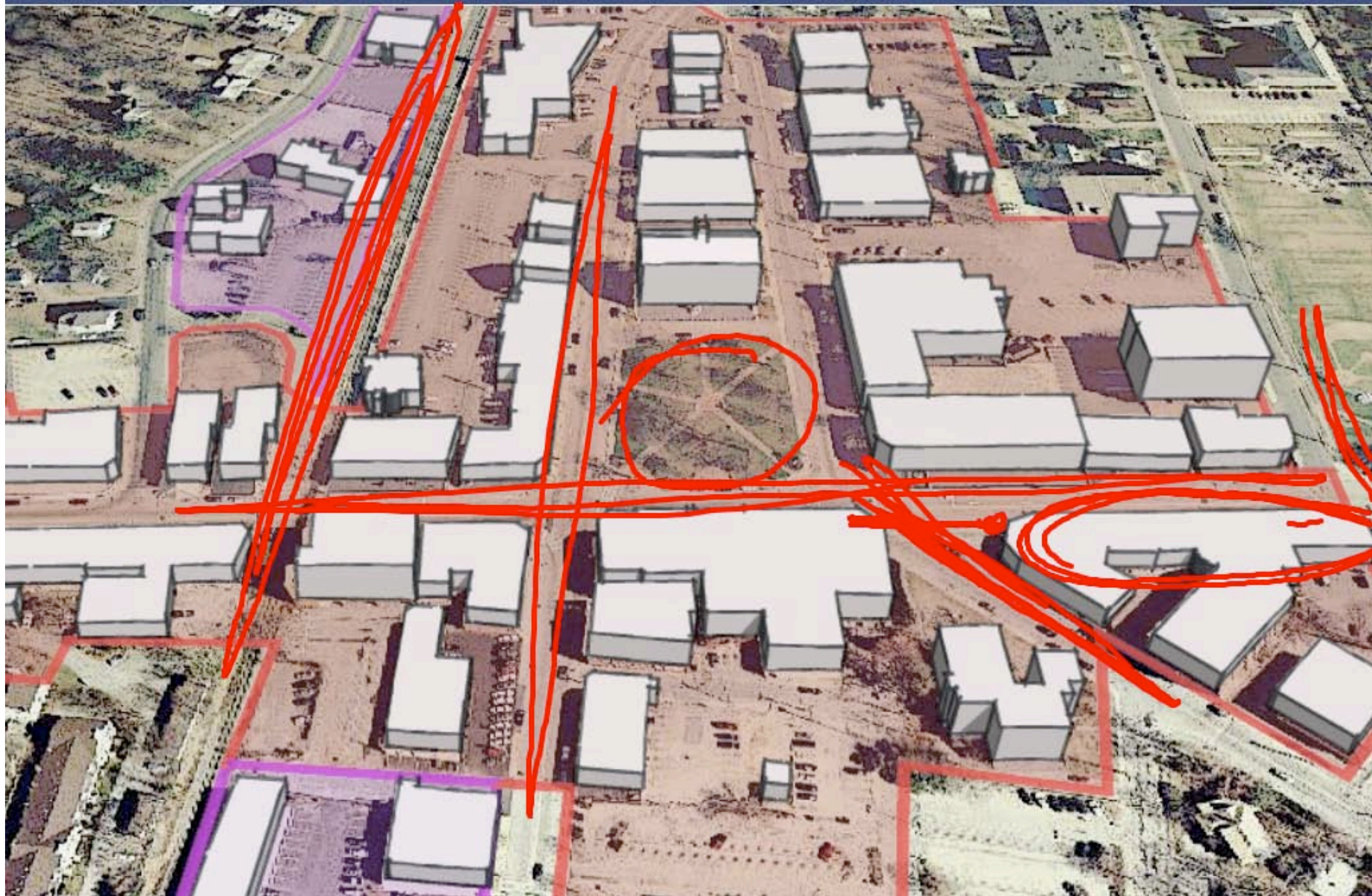
- STUDY AREA 1: CB
- STUDY AREA 2: CSB, HAB
- Center Business (CB)
- Chestnut Street Business (CSB)
- Highland Avenue Business (HAB)
- Others Districts
- Parks
- Commuter Station
- Rail
- Shelters
- MBTA Bus Route
- Roads
- Parking
- Driveways



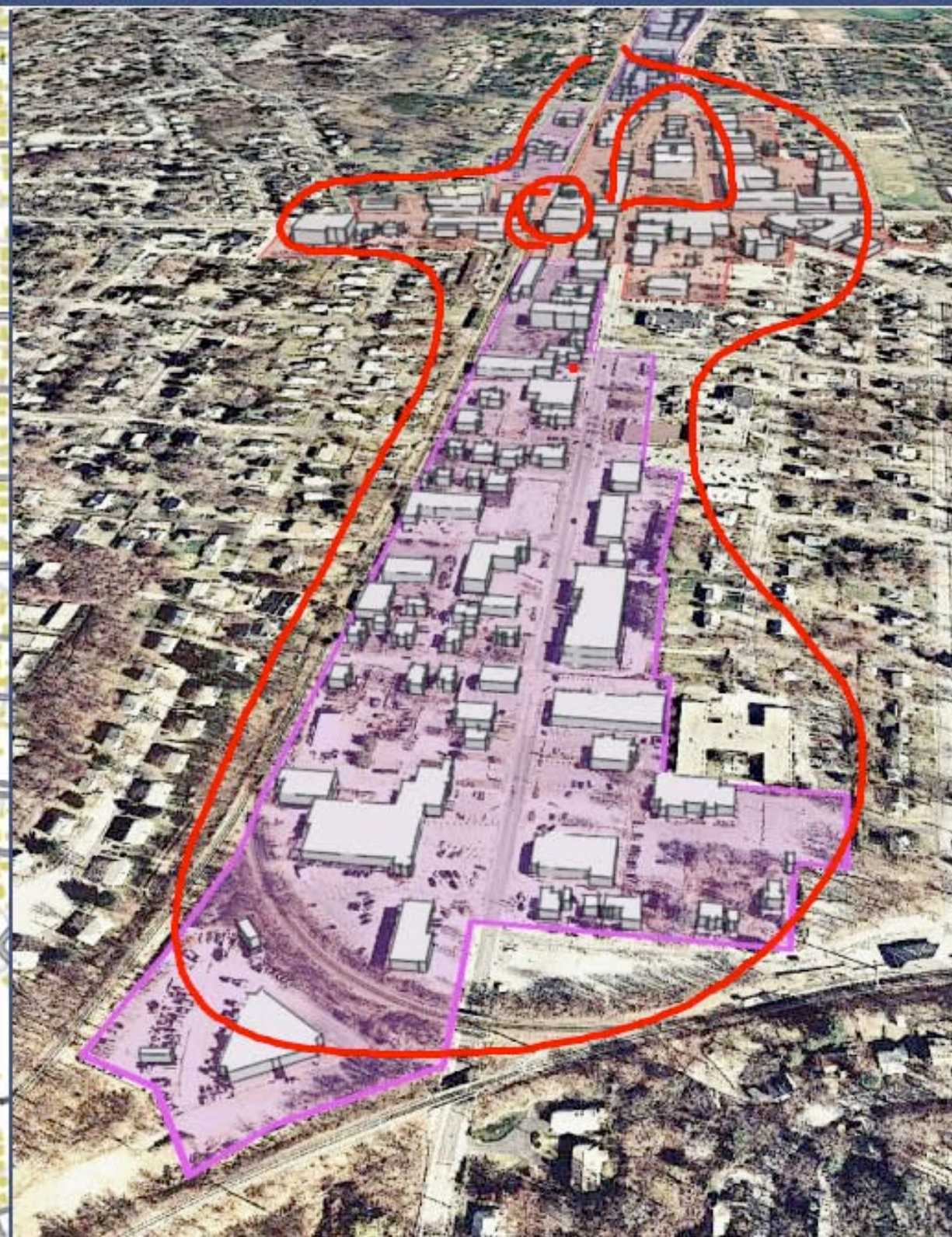
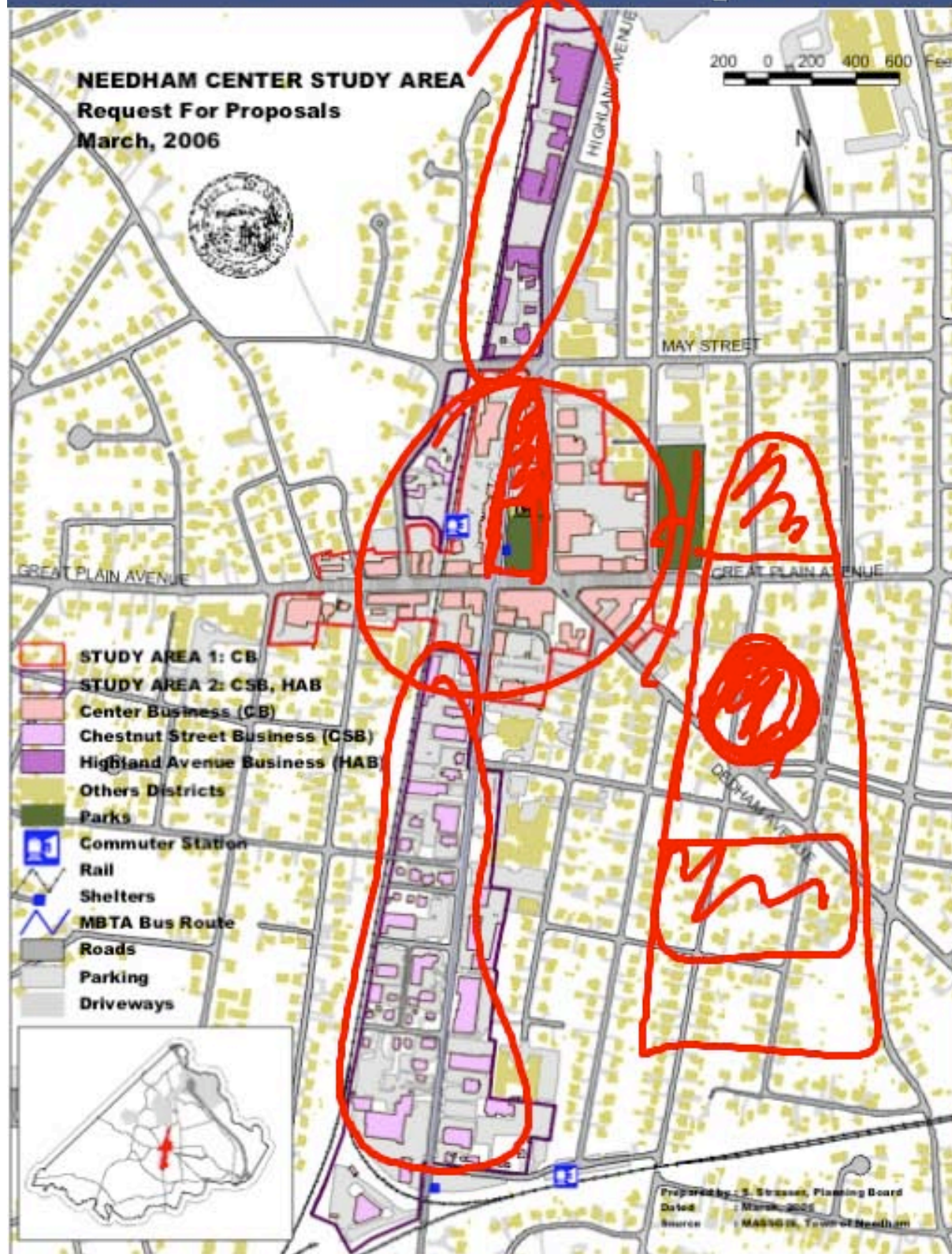
Prepared by: S. Strasser, Planning Board
 Dated: March, 2006
 Source: MASSGIS, Town of Needham

PROJECT SCHEDULE	2006			2007				
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
GENERAL								
Prepare Work Plan/Time Schedule								
Establish Protocol with FWG/PPBC								
10% - SURVEY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS/MARKET TREND								
Existing Land Use								
Ownership Patterns								
Visual Assessment of Building Conditions								
Traffic, Parking and Streetscape								
Market Trends - Commercial, Retail & Office								
10% - IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY GOALS								
Community Workshops		 						
Public Feedback								
Documentation								
25% - CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN								
Guidelines for Mixed-Use, Downtown District								
Three Alternative Scenarios								
Traffic, Parking & Streetscape Improvements								
Zoning Plan								
Economic Development Implementation								
Community Workshops			 					
Public Feedback								
45% - COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN								
Design Guidelines								
Circulation & Parking Plan								
Zoning Plan								
Cost Analysis & Economic Impact								
Economic Implementation Strategy								
10% - REPORTS								
Draft Report								
Town Review								
Final Report								
Presentation at Town Meeting								
MEETINGS								
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May

What Traffic



What Development Plan



How Scope of Work

Community Goals & Objectives (10%)

- Town-wide Workshops

- **Consensus = Action**

- Business
- Property Owners
- Residents

- Retailers / Tenants

How Scope of Work

Survey of Existing Conditions (10%)

- Market Trends
- Land Use
- Ownership Patterns
- Building Conditions
- Traffic / Parking / Streetscape
- Zoning
- Density
- <Design Guidelines>

- ① > Density usage
- ② Parking Structure - Junction Place / Chapel Place
- ③ Mixed complementary uses -
- ④ Enhanced community space
- ⑤ Downtown Housing ~ walking ~
- ⑥ Streetscape - GOOD/BAD ~ inconsistent
- ⑦ Change-use / Landscape requirements.
- ⑧ NIGHT ~ Lighting / Safety / ≡ LIVEABILITY.
- ⑨ PARKING STRUCTURES.
- ⑩ PRIDE ~ UPKEEP of Facilities (pride of ownership)
- ⑪ LONG TERM GOALS + Achievable, realistic goals.
- ⑫ Optimum development re: ZONING.
- ⑬ 3 versus 1 Business District.
- ⑭ Active transportation (rail/bus) ≡ Housing (All) Apartments
Condos.
- ⑮ Community / gathering space / meeting opportunities. UNIQUE NEEDHAM.

- ①⑥ Examples - commons (circle of peace) = place / seat / rest / observe.
- ①⑦ Celebration of Town. Harvest Fair / Street Fair / July 4th.
- ①⑧ What is the goal? Objective? Towns fix up down town.
- ①⑨ What is catalyst to make it happen?
- ②⑥ Destination shopping - X
- ②① Immediate ideas - consistent w/ long term goals.